DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 161 574 RC 010 757

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TITLE The Identification of Texas Anglo, Black and Chicano Child Rearing and Child Care Practices in Relation to Child Care Career Competencies.
PUB DATE Apr 77
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New York, New York, April, 1977); For related document, see ED 131 331

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Anglo Americans; Attendant Training; *Attitudes; Blacks; Child Care; *Child Care Centers; *Child Care Workers; Child Rearing; Cultural Differences; *Cultural Factors; Day Care Services; Early Childhood; Ethnic Groups; Mexican Americans; Parent Attitudes; Professional Personnel; Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Chicanos; *Texas

ABSTRACT

To identify cultural factors in both child rearing and child care practices which may influence training of preschool day care personnel, the study ascertained cultural differences in Anglo, Black, and Chicano child rearing practices in Texas and differences in how parents, center personnel, and early childhood professionals viewed appropriate child care center practices. Questionnaires were administered to 374 Anglo, Black, and Chicano parents, 367 child care practitioners, and 52 professionals in six geographic regions. Day care centers involved were considered by ethnic composition, urban/rural location, nonprofit/commercial status, and family income level. Responses were grouped into family relationships, discipline, feeding-eating practices, sleeping behaviors, toilet-training, verbal interactions, child care center, and parent-center relationships. Results showed overall general agreement among parents and practitioners on child rearing practices and attitudes toward child care centers; few major differences in attitudes, opinions, and practices of parents and practitioners; there were some cultural and regional differences. Though cultural factors may not be as important to personnel training as suspected, data indicated vocational training should encompass cross-cultural elements, bilingual capabilities, and professional teaching competencies. (RS)

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ED161574

THE IDENTIFICATION OF TEXAS ANGLO, BLACK AND CHICANO CHILD REARING AND CHILD CARE PRACTICES IN RELATION TO CHILD CARE CAREER COMPETENCIES

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A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the
American Educational Research Association
New York, New York, April, 1977

RC 010757

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University of Houston
Houston, Texas

April, 1977

The Identification of Texas Anglo, Black and Chicano Child Rearing and Child Care Practices In Relation to Child Care Career Competencies

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Introduction

The number of preschool children in day care centers is expected to continue to increase significantly in Texas, as is true throughout the nation. In order for quality day care to become readily available to young children, the need for skilled personnel with specialized training must be recognized. It has become increasingly apparent that additional research is needed to identify culturally critical behaviors to be included in educational training programs.

The identification of culturally critical behaviors is the first step in providing guidelines for training center personnel to work with children from multi-ethnic backgrounds. To ascertain the relationship of Anglo, Black and Chicano child rearing and child care practices to new child care careers in Texas, the following questions were posed:

(1) Are there, in fact, cultural differences reflected in child rearing practices in Texas?

(2) What are the dimensions of these cultural differences?

(3) Are these dimensions contingent on specific factors?

(4) Are there differences in how parents, center personnel and early childhood professionals view appropriate center child care practices?

For ease of communication, the terms Anglo, Black and Chicano are used in place of Anglo American, Black American and Mexican American. Anglo, Black and Chicano are terms which serve psychologically to mark self-identification. In Texas, Chicano specifically refers to those who are of Mexican descent and

may be Spanish-speaking.

Objectives

To insure the identification of cultural factors in both child rearing and child care practices which may influence training for child care personnel, the following objectives were defined:

(1) To identify Anglo, Black and Chicano child rearing practices

(2) To identify child care practices

(3) To compare regional Anglo, Black and Chicano child rearing and center child care practices in relation to culture

(4) To identify the relationship of cultural factors to vocational training for child care personnel

Sample

The sample consisted of 374 Anglo, Black and Chicano parents, 367 child care practitioners and 52 professionals in six geographic regions in Texas. The State Department of Public Welfare was asked to provide a list of licensed day care centers, including both commercial and non-profit, in each of six regions. The 94 day care centers from which practitioners and parents were drawn were centers licensed to serve a minimum of thirty children and had an ethnic composition of either 80% Anglo children, 80% Black children, 80% Chicano children or a tri-ethnic population with none of the three cultural groups representing more than 50%. Three additional factors were considered: 1) location in an urban or rural area and 2) non-profit or commercial status, and 3) the income level of families as either poverty level according to federal guidelines, between poverty level and state median income of $11,500, or above the state median income was identified.

Directors furnished lists from which parents and practitioners were drawn. Each director was asked to list 10 parents, representing all the

ethnic groups in attendance at her/his center. In order to achieve a balance of practitioners' viewpoints, the decision was made to interview the director, assistant-director or head teacher, a teacher, an assistant-teacher or aide, and one other support staff from curriculum or program directors and social workers to cooks, custodians and bus drivers. As anticipated, the largest number of practitioners interviewed were teachers who composed 43% of the practitioner sample. Of the remaining, 26% were directors, 20% were aides and 11% were other support staff.

Although ethnicity was not a criterion for inclusion of either practitioners or professionals in the study, an effort was made to achieve a reasonable balance among the three ethnic groups in the parent sample which consisted of 41% Anglos, 20% Blacks, and 39% Chicanos. The distribution of practitioners was a little closer to the ethnic proportions in Texas' population with 44% Anglos, 27% Blacks, and 29% Chicanos. The parent sample was also well balanced in relation to income levels with 32% being from poverty level, 34% having income between poverty level and Texas' median income of $11,500, and 31% having income above the median.

The professional sample was drawn from lists of licensing workers and secondary and higher education faculties. The final professional N of 52 was included in the data analyses, but considered too small to provide significant data.

Methodology

The study began with the development of three interview instruments, one each for parents, practitioners and professionals (N=793). A Spanish translation, following the Werner and Campbell methodology of descentering, was used with parents whose dominant language was Spanish. The second phase was a pilot study from which final response categories were developed for the three instruments. The questionnaires were administered to the sample in six

geographic regions in Texas during Spring, 1975. The computer program, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, was used to analyze the data.

Results and Conclusions

The responses were organized into the following areas: family relationships, discipline, feeding-eating practices, sleeping behaviors, toilet-training, verbal interactions, child care center, and parent-center relationships. There was no significant data in family relationships and verbal interactions. Within the remaining categories, this paper reports the most significant data concerning cultural differences in child rearing and child care center practices and compares the two. The results are discussed by presenting the particular questions from the instrument which resulted in significant responses.

A. Discipline

Parents: What do you consider bad behavior in _____? (child's name)

(1) disobeys orders
(2) uses bad words
(3) talks back
(4) hits or fights

Practitioners: What do you consider bad behavior in a child in a center?

(1) hurting others
(2) not following rules, directions
(3) not listening
(4) using bad words
(5) engaging in sex play
(6) not cooperating

Discipline is considered to be one of the most important aspects of child rearing. Though all ethnic groups of parents ranked "disobeys" as the most unacceptable child behavior, significantly more Blacks than Anglos or Chicanos did so. In contrast, significantly fewer Black parents than Anglo or Chicano parents chose "hits" as unacceptable behavior. Practitioners, on the other hand, generally identified "hurting others" as the most unacceptable child behavior.

Similar differences between parents and practitioners emerged in their ranking of "disobedience" as the most unacceptable behavior. Only 7% of practitioners compared to 25% of parents chose this response. Thus, better communication between parents and practitioners on strategies for eliciting desired behavior from children may be in order.

If _____ (child's name) does something that pleases you, what do you do?

(1) give her/him a hug
(2) smile at her/him
(3) praise her/him
(4) give extra privilege
(5) reward her/him

If _____ (child's name) does something you don't like, what do you do?

(1) give her/him a mean look
(2) talk to her/him
(3) yell at her/him
(4) hit her/him
(5) isolate her/him
(6) take away a privilege
(7) deny food

In responding to children's unacceptable behavior in general, parents and practitioners agreed that positive techniques were more appropriate than negative ones. Cross-cultural agreement was again reached when parents and practitioners in all three ethnic groups responded that they used both verbal and physical responses rather than tangible rewards when their children did something to please them.

B. Feeding-Eating Practices

(If bottle fed), how was the bottle fed to _____ (child's name)?

(0) not applicable
(1) held him/her and fed bottle
(2) propped up the bottle

Significant variation in both parents' and practitioners' responses to questions concerning feed-eating practices was regional rather than ethnic, suggesting that urban-rural influences rather than culture affect baby-feeding

practices in Texas. Across ethnic groups a majority of parents (79%) responded that they hold their infants while bottle-feeding them. Thus, if the center care of infants is to reflect home child rearing practices in order to make the move from home to center as smooth as possible, it would appear that centers should provide for infants to be held while being bottle fed.

C. Toilet-Training Practices

How do you handle toilet training in this center?

(0) do not do it
(1) on a schedule
(2) watch for a signal from child
(3) cooperate with parents' suggestions
(4) give child toy or book when on potty
(5) instruct child clearly
(6) provide for child to observe other children

No significant cultural differences appeared in parents' handling of toilet-training. However, cultural differences among practitioners' handling of toilet-training emerged. Chicano practitioners endorsed "watch for signal from child" as the most important toilet-training procedure. Anglo and Black practitioners used both "watch for signal from child" and "schedule" for this purpose.

How old should a child be when you begin toilet training? (in mos.)

How old was _____ when completely toilet-trained? (in mos.)
(child's name)

Tri-ethnically, parent and practitioners responses to the age when toilet-training should begin were significantly differentiated. Black and Chicano parents consistently chose younger ages than Anglo parents. It is evident that early toilet-training is valued and practiced more extensively among Blacks and Chicanos than among Anglos. As expected, this resulted in Black and Chicano children being reported as completely toilet-trained at an earlier age than Anglo children. The data supports the training of staff in toilet-training procedures which include sensitivity to ethnic variation in this area of child rearing and training.

In your home, would you allow little boys and girls to use the bathroom at the same time?

(1) yes
(2) no

In answer to the question of young boys and girls using the bathroom simultaneously, there was significant ethnic variation. It would seem that the general agreement among early childhood professionals on simultaneous use of the bathroom has not been accepted by parents or practitioners in general, and especially not by Black and Chicano parents. Though 60% of the total parent group responded "no" there was significant variation. The percentage of Anglo parents (63%) who responded "yes" was almost 3 times that of Blacks and Chicanos. Anglo parents were therefore significantly more supportive of this practice than either Black or Chicano parents were.

In addition, significant regional variation occurred in parents' and practitioners' responses. Valley parent responses were very different from others in the high percentage (87%) not allowing boys and girls to use the bathroom simultaneously. The next highest parent "no" percentage (63%) was from a central Texas community, San Antonio. For practitioners a majority in the two largest metropolitant areas, Houston and Dallas, responded, "yes." These results suggest that a re-evaluation of the practice and its overall positive or negative effects may be warranted and that if this practice is to be enforced, day care personnel will have to be able to support this practice to parents.

D. Child Care Center

Eight of the twelve questions on child care practices produced either ethnically or regionally significant data or both.

What is the most important characteristic for the center staff to have?

(1) belongs to same ethnic group as children
(2) loving, warm, kind personality
(3) trained/experienced in teaching children

The responses yielded statistically significant data only regionally. Regional data showed more support for "trained/expereinced" in urban areas than in rural areas.

All ethnic and population groups agreed that "loving, warm, kind personality" was the most important attribute for child care personnel. However, significantly more Anglo parents and practitioners than either Blacks or Chicanos of either group made this choice. Practitioners with limited training and experience in the field probably believe that the ability to relate well to children with a "warm, loving personality" is more important than training or experience.

A significant minority of Black and Chicano parents and practitioners chose "trained, experienced" as the most important characteristic. This choice may be indicative of minority parents' feelings that the quality education needed by their children is more likely to be provided by trained, experienced teachers rather than by teachers who are only loving and warm.

Parents: What is the most important thing the center should do for your child?

(1) help him learn--teach him
(2) take care of him
(3) see that s/he gets good food
(4) see that s/he gets enough rest
(5) help the child get needed services
(6) help the child by helping the family

Practitioners: What are the three most important things your center does for children?

(1) provides for physical needs
(2) helps families with problems
(3) develops self-concept
(4) develops socialization skills
(5) provides good educational program
(6) builds positive child/adult relationship
(7) develops language skills
(8) provides good environment
(9) prepares children for school
(10) gives proper food
(11) develops creativity, curiosity and cognition
(12) promotes autonomy
(13) models appropriate behavior
(14) has good discipline

The answer to these questions revealed significant variation only in the ethnic and regional analyses of parent responses. 65% of all parents chose "to help child learn--teach child," but of these, 75% of both Black and Chicano parents, and only 50% of Anglo parents made that choice.

Parents high regard for a center's responsibility to educate children was clearly enunciated in the choosing of "to help child learn--teach child" as most important, while practitioners emphasized socialization.

> What is the most important thing the center should teach your child?
>
> (1) to be ready for school
> (2) to take care of self
> (3) to get along with others
> (4) to behave right/do what told, follow directions
> (5) to speak good English

A large majority of Anglo parents and practitioners responded "to get along with others" as important for children to learn. "Cognitive skills," the comparable category for "to be ready for school" on the parent instrument was not popular with any of the practitioners. On the other hand, the first choice of both Black and Chicano parents was "to be ready for school." The ethnicity of children in the center appears to have influenced the practitioner's responses. More than one-fourth of practitioners in centers with tri-ethnic population selected "cognitive skills."

In addition, significant regional variation occurred as the majority of parents in all regions except the Valley chose "to get along with others." The intersection of ethnicity is apparent in this regional effect as the Valley parent sample was almost all Chicano. In both Dallas and Houston, the percentage choosing "to be ready for school" was almost equal to that for "to get along with others."

> What is the most important kind of activity the center should offer your child?
>
> (1) academic
> (2) creative
> (3) physical

Black and Chicano parents gave first ranking to "academic," second to "creative," and third to "physical." In contrast, Anglo parents' first choice was "creative," also the first choice of all practitioners.

Parents' choice of "academic" as the most important kind of center activity supports the trend in parents' responses to related questions to promote the educational importance of the child care center. This trend would seem to indicate both the importance of providing child care personnel with a comprehensive curriculum to develop all the needed professional competencies and the need to keep parents well informed about center goals and activities through which they are achieved.

> Should the center teach about United States, Black and Chicano history, holidays, leaders, food, etc.?
>
> Does your center actually teach about Black and Chicano history, holidays, leaders, foods, etc.?

The answers to the next series of questions dealing with whether U.S., Black and Chicano culture should be taught in centers and then whether they are being taught revealed much significant and provocative data. Parents of all ethnic groups agreed that the culture of all groups should be taught, but the level of agreement varied. There was no significant difference among the three ethnic groups on the need to teach about American culture.

In answer to the question on teaching Black culture, the proportion of approving Blacks was 85%. 81% of Anglo parents agreed closely, but Chicano agreement was by only 66%. There was agreement across ethnic groups that Black culture was not being taught in the majority of centers.

When parents were asked about teaching Chicano culture, approximately 75% of each ethnic group agreed that Chicano culture should be taught and that it actually was not being taught. It is interesting to note that a lower percentage of Chicanos than of either Anglo or Black parents believed

that Chicano culture should be taught.

Regional analyses revealed significant differences in parents' responses to whether Black and Chicano culture should be taught and in both parents' and practitioners' responses to whether Black and Chicano culture was actually being taught. Rural South Texas parents and practitioners reported the highest negative response to the teaching of either Black or Chicano culture. These rural South Texas parents were the only regional group in which a majority responded "no" to the teaching of Black culture.

In general, practitioners' responses were in agreement with those of the parents, though slightly fewer Anglo and Black practitioners than parents agreed that Black culture should be taught, while slightly more Chicano practitioners than parents agreed on teaching Black culture. The same response pattern appeared on the question of teaching Chicano culture.

At least 20% more practitioners than parents stated that Black and Chicano culture were being taught, which suggests that many parents were not aware of the extent of cultural enrichment occurring in the child care center. It also seems to be true that Black or Chicano culture tend to be taught more in centers which have a dominant Black or Chicano clientele and more readily by practitioners belonging to the particular culture. These results support the relevance of cross-cultural training and activities for child care personnel.

If a child comes to the center speaking only Spanish, how should the teacher talk with her/him when s/he first comes?

(1) speak only in English
(2) speak only in Spanish
(3) speak in English and Spanish
(4) other

How should the teacher talk with the Spanish speaking child after s/he has been at the center for some time?

(1) in English only
(2) in Spanish only
(3) in English and Spanish

Across ethnic groups there was agreement among parents that they should be taught in English and Spanish both when they first come and after some time.

Practitioners responses were similar to those of parents, but "in English only" was chosen significantly more by practitioners than by parents in answer to both questions. A significant number of Chicano practitioners, 39%, however, chose "in Spanish only" in answer to the first question. This proportion dropped dramatically to less than 1% in answer to the second question. Another shift appeared in Anglo practitioners' choice of speaking English only from 16% for when the child first comes to school to 55% for after the child has been in school some time.

The general agreement that it is necessary for a teacher to be able to speak at least part of the time in Spanish to a child speaking only Spanish when the child first comes and after some time strongly suggests the need for child care personnel who work in centers with Spanish speaking children to be bilingual.

E. Parent-Center Relationships

What do you do at or for the center?

(0) nothing
(1) attend parent meetings
(2) do volunteer work
(3) serve on advisory board
(4) help make or repair things

In regard to parents' actual involvement in the center, there was significant ethnic variation; almost half of Anglo parents responded "do nothing," whereas a third of both Black and Chicano parents made "attend parent meetings" their first choice of involvement. There was also striking ethnic variation in practitioners' responses. A much larger percentage of Black and Chicano practitioners than of Anglos reported some form of parental involvement.

What should the parent's relationship be with the center?

(1) to see that child goes to center
(2) learn how to teach (rear) her/his child
(3) work with the center for her/his child
(4) both 2 and 3 above

The question of parents' relationship to the center is closely allied to the previous one, with similar ethnic variations. A significantly larger percentage of Black parents than of Anglo and Chicano parents--four fifths of the Blacks compared to not quite half of the other two groups--elected a broad relationship including both working with and learning from the center.

Educational/Scientific Importance of Study

The results documented an overall trend of general agreement among parents and practitioners on child rearing practices and attitudes toward child care centers, though some significant differences emerged. This study documented only a few major differences in the attitudes, opinions and practices of Texas Anglo, Black and Chicano parents and practitioners. Some differences that surfaced were cultural, but some were tied to geographical locations. Thus, the results suggest that there are few clear, uncomplicated cultural differences in the relationship of Anglo, Black and Chicano child-rearing practices and child care center practices.

In sum, cultural factors may not be as important to vocational training of child care personnel as has been suspected. Since there is agreement among these groups on the need for young children to be taught about both the dominant and minority cultures, it is apparent that vocational training of all child care personnel should include learning experiences designed to enhance general ethno-cultural awareness and understanding, provide specific information about Anglo, Black and Chicano heritage, develop the ability to speak Spanish, and enable classroom personnel to design and implement cultural enrichment activities for young children.